

SOD HOUSE OF GUSTAV LOHRICH.
BELLWOOD NEBRASKA. (VICINITY)

Butler Co.

H.A.B.S. No 35-10

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL & DESCRIPTIVE DATA.
DISTRICT No 35.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
WM. L. STEELE, DISTRICT OFFICER
2236 ST. MARYS AVE; OMAHA NEBRASKA.

SOD HOUSE OF GUSTAV ROHRICH

Bellwood, Nebraska.

HISTORY.

Gustav Rohrich, his wife and three children, natives of Austria, settled in Butler County in 1879. Four years later Mr. Rohrich leased 80 acres of school land $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles west and one mile north of Bellwood, for farming. In the fall of that year, 1883, he completed his sod house, and Mr. Rohrich, now eighty-five, still makes his home there.

The sod was taken from a field about a mile north of the house with plows drawn by oxen, as were the carts transporting it. The plow turned the sod in variable strips from a foot to sixteen inches in width and from three to four inches deep, and the strips were sectioned with a sharp spade into blocks, varying from two feet to two feet eight inches in length. The sod was laid in the same position as it was turned out, that is, with the grass surface down.

The house shows a definite building design, an irregular regularity, and of the many sod houses in Alexis township a half century ago, it alone remains.

For the preservation of the original structure repairs were made from time to time. The exposed layer of the first two board-thick roof has been replaced by cedar shingles, and the original roof of the cave, dug when the two room house was built, is now a cement vault, instead of boughs and earth. When clay plaster did not prevent wall erosion, a thin coat of lime plaster was applied and a decade after construction a half inch coat of cement plaster was put over the entire outer wall surface. Cement plaster on the cave floor and walls, a second board floor in the larger of the two rooms, and finishing the interior with lime plaster complete the changes.

Architecturally, the house reflects influences of stone construction, early Colonial details and the make-shift shanty of early settlers.

*The above information was gathered by
Mr. Janike, architect, who also measured the
building.*

W. J. Gray, Squad Leader

Reviewed by H.C.F. 1936.